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Ritchie, Nick [orcid.org/0000-0002-6397-7498](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6397-7498) and Ingram, Paul (2013) Trident in UK Politics and Public Opinion. BASIC (British American Security Information Council).

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# Trident in UK Politics and Public Opinion

## Summary

Nuclear weapons policy looks set to feature as a political issue in the 2015 general election. A broad consensus on UK nuclear weapons policy since the end of the Cold War amongst the party leaderships of the three main Westminster parties has been disturbed by the debate on whether and, if so, how to replace the current Trident nuclear weapons system. This has been exacerbated by a coalition government in which the Liberal Democrats have broken ranks and moved towards active consideration of a smaller, cheaper replacement for Trident that does not entail continuous deployment of nuclear weapons at sea. The Conservative leadership remains committed to a like-for-like replacement of the current system in line with the policy adopted by the Blair government in its 2006 White Paper on *The Future of the United Kingdom's Nuclear Deterrent*. Labour policy remains unclear. An internal debate on whether to stick with the policy adopted in 2006 or move closer towards a Liberal Democrat position is underway.

*Public opinion remains deeply divided on nuclear weapons and choices around Trident replacement.*

The official line from the shadow defence team is that it is awaiting publication of the Trident Alternatives Study and the BASIC Trident Commission report. It is highly unlikely that any of the main Westminster political parties will enter the next election on manifesto commitment to complete nuclear disarmament. The debate is further complicated by the outcome of the referendum on Scottish

independence in September 2014 and the implications of a 'yes' vote for continued basing of Trident at the Clyde Naval Base.

Public opinion remains deeply divided on nuclear weapons and choices around Trident replacement. Over twenty opinion polls have been conducted since 2005 when the debate on Trident replacement began to gather momentum. Polls suggest that opinion has moved towards relinquishing nuclear weapons after Trident when given a simple yes/no choice. This is generally strengthened when respondents are given a cost of £20-25 billion for the capital costs of replacing Trident starting with a new fleet of ballistic missile submarines.

<sup>1</sup> Dr Nick Ritchie is a Lecturer in International Security, Department of Politics, University of York. He has written widely on UK nuclear weapons policy including *A Nuclear Weapons-Free World? Britain, Trident and the Challenges Ahead* (Palgrave, 2012). Paul Ingram is Executive Director of BASIC.

Opinion is split more evenly three ways when a third option of a smaller, cheaper replacement is introduced. Data, here, suggest the electorate is broadly in favour of keeping nuclear weapons in some form, but against a like-for-like replacement of the current system. The polls also present a plurality of views on whether nuclear weapons are necessary for UK security, whether they make the UK a safer place to live, whether the UK should retain nuclear weapons as long as other states have them, and the circumstances under which the UK should use its nuclear weapons. The electorate tends to value the security seen to derive from continued possession of nuclear weapons whilst recognising the dangers of possession to national and global security.<sup>2</sup> It is also reluctant to support use of nuclear weapons even if the UK is subject to a nuclear attack.

*The indeterminacy of public opinion gives all three main Westminster parties political space to rethink UK nuclear weapons policy after Trident or recommit to current policy.*

The indeterminacy of public opinion gives all three main Westminster parties political space to rethink UK nuclear weapons policy after Trident or recommit to current policy. Polls suggest the electoral consequences of policy change or stasis are unlikely to be decisive. However, the polls also

demonstrate that men, those in the older age groups and Conservative voters are more likely to favour replacing Trident and are more inclined to think nuclear weapons make the UK safer. Policy change to a smaller, cheaper, 'de-alerted' system or nuclear disarmament could put some votes at risk in these cohorts. This is tempered by polls that demonstrate the relatively low salience of nuclear weapons policy in UK politics and polls that demonstrate greater support for policy change over stasis amongst those for whom nuclear weapons policy is an issue that could shape their vote.

<sup>2</sup> House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee, Engaging the Public in National Strategy, HC 435 (London: HMSO, 2013), pp. 2-3.

# Introduction

In a decision announced in 2006 and confirmed by parliamentary vote in March 2007, the UK embarked on a long, expensive and controversial programme to replace its current Trident nuclear weapons system, beginning with the procurement of a new fleet of ballistic missile submarines designed to carry its Trident missiles and arsenal of nuclear warheads. The United Kingdom is unusual amongst nuclear weapon states for having a history throughout the second half of the twentieth century of high-profile and heated public debate on nuclear weapons policy, covering moral, strategic, diplomatic, industrial and budgetary issues. It is widely believed that the debate in the 1980s had a significant impact on the wider governance of the country. The divisions were deep and polarised. The cause of nuclear disarmament has attracted some of the country's largest and longest protests, which in turn have sparked a resolute backlash among other sections of public opinion. It had two peaks, the first 1958-63 and the second, coinciding with the acquisition of the original Trident system from 1980-89 and the last years of the Cold War. This history resonates today and current UK debate on whether and, if so, how to replace the current Trident system remains deeply political.

***The United Kingdom is unusual amongst nuclear weapon states for having a history throughout the second half of the twentieth century of high-profile and heated public debate on nuclear weapons policy, covering moral, strategic, diplomatic, industrial and budgetary issues.***

A senior member of the previous Labour government under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown once remarked that winning the intellectual debate on whether or not to replace Trident is one thing, winning the political debate is quite another.<sup>3</sup>

This briefing is published on the eve of the government's presentation to Parliament of its own *Trident Alternatives Study* looking into the pros and cons of alternative nuclear weapon systems and postures. The study marks a new three-year phase in the on-going debate that will encompass the 2015 General Election, the subsequent Strategic Defence and Security Review, and culminate in the 'Main Gate' procurement decision for the new fleet of submarines scheduled for 2016. BASIC's Trident Commission, with a broader mandate and due to be published later this year, will mark an important contribution to this phase of the debate. This briefing examines the contemporary politics of Trident replacement in two parts. First, it outlines party political views of nuclear weapons policy; and second, it explores public opinion drawing on over 20 opinion polls conducted since 2005, including new research commissioned for this briefing.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Nick Ritchie, 2008.

# Part I: Trident and party politics

## UK involvement in emerging international movements

In recent years there has been a renaissance in international networks to promote global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, though this time the initiative has come from mainstream politicians across the political spectrum, senior statesmen and women and former military leaders. Sparked by a letter in January 2007 in the *Wall Street Journal* by Senator Sam Nunn, former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and George Shultz, and former Defense Secretary William Perry,<sup>4</sup> the Nuclear Security Project and the Global Zero Movement were created. The Nuclear Security Project was formed in association with the Hoover Institution and the Nuclear Threat Initiative in order to develop the arguments of these four statesmen. The Global Zero movement was established to appeal to a wider global audience, with a series of summits, the development of high-profile signatories, and other forms of outreach, including a feature film called *Countdown to Zero*. The case for significant progress towards a world free of nuclear weapons became a central plank of the Obama administration's foreign policy articulated in full in a major speech on nuclear disarmament in Prague in April 2009 and again in Berlin in June 2013.

<sup>4</sup> George Shultz, William Perry, Henry Kissinger, and Sam Nunn, 'A World Free of Nuclear Weapons', *Wall Street Journal*, 4 January 2007. Available at <<http://www.hoover.org/publications/hoover-digest/article/6109>>.

*In recent years there has been a renaissance in international networks to promote global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation*

Senior politicians in Britain were quick to catch up with developments in the United States. Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett gave a speech on 25 June 2007 at the Carnegie International Nonproliferation Conference in Washington D.C. on behalf of the government endorsing the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons and outlining initial steps the government would take toward that end.<sup>5</sup>

Later speeches by Prime Minister Gordon Brown expanded this agenda.<sup>6</sup> On 30

June 2008, in an article in the London Times entitled 'Start Worrying and Learn to Ditch the Bomb', former UK Foreign and Defence Secretaries Sir Malcolm Rifkind (Conservative), Lord David Owen (Crossbencher), Lord Douglas Hurd (Conservative), and Lord George Robertson (Labour)

endorsed the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons, in the context of likely "widespread proliferation with extremism and geopolitical tension".<sup>7</sup> Sir Malcolm subsequently became the leading British signatory to Global Zero.

<sup>5</sup> Margaret Beckett, *Keynote Address: A World Free of Nuclear Weapons?*, 25 June 2007. Available at <<http://carnegieendowment.org/2007/06/25/keynote-address-world-free-of-nuclear-weapons/e15>>.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Brown, speech to the Chamber of Commerce in Delhi, India, 21 January 2008.

<sup>7</sup> 'Start worrying and learn to ditch the bomb', *The Times*, 30 June 2008. Available at <[http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest\\_contributors/article4237387.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article4237387.ece)>.



Soon after this a group of British parliamentarians formed the Top Level Group of UK Parliamentarians for Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament and Non-proliferation, with a highly impressive cross-party membership of former Foreign and Defence Secretaries, Chiefs of Defence Staff and diplomats sitting in the House of Commons or Lords. The group was formed to raise awareness within Britain and particularly within Parliament of the importance of reducing the risk of nuclear conflict and the need to work towards a world free of nuclear weapons. The Convener of the Group, Lord Browne of Ladyton, also went on to found the European Leadership Network, a similar group of senior pan-European political, military and diplomatic figures that has developed rapidly since 2010 to become the leading network of high-level individuals involved in the European strategic nuclear debate. Similar leadership networks have since been established in Asia and Latin America.

## UK Party Politics

UK political parties have historically been far from unified in their positions on nuclear weapons policy and global nuclear disarmament since the UK became a nuclear power, and individual politicians have changed their positions (in both directions) as their careers have progressed. The polarised nature of the debate in the 1980s was diluted by the end of the Cold War in 1989, the decision made by the Labour Party to abandon its policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament after it lost the 1987 General Election (a policy adopted by its annual conference in 1982 prior to the 1983 election), and subsequent bilateral and unilateral disarmament measures and force reductions by most of the established nuclear weapon states in response to the changed geo-political environment. Those strongly in favour of continued possession of nuclear weapons have been content to see reductions in UK warheads, delivery systems, operational deployments and readiness, as the political salience of the nuclear weapons issue has declined.

The security policy establishment has been more inclined to consider alternative nuclear postures in the absence of immediate nuclear threats following the demise of the Soviet Union and Britain's participation in a range of post-Cold War military interventions in which its nuclear capability has played no obvious role.

Cross-party agreement has emerged on the heels of the global zero initiative for Britain to play a leading role amongst nuclear weapon states in moving towards a world free of nuclear weapons through multilateral disarmament. This is the policy of the current Government and a continuation of the policy of the previous Labour Government. This was evident when the issue was last fully debated by Parliament in March 2007 when Members of Parliament and the Lords separately considered the Government's White Paper of December 2006 declaring its decision to start the concept phase for the next generation of ballistic missile submarines to replace the current Vanguard class, and to participate in the US life extension programme for the Trident II D5 ballistic missile fleet. Government ministers sought to balance the commitment to this first phase of Trident renewal with a further modest reduction in warhead numbers and a concerted diplomatic strategy to promote multilateral nuclear disarmament. This balanced approach has been taken forward by the coalition government that came to power in May 2010. A dual commitment to the logic of deterrence and the logic of disarmament aptly characterises Britain's post-Cold War nuclear weapons policy – what Colin Gray has called “running with nuclear fox and riding with the disarmament hounds”.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Colin Gray, “An International ‘Norm’ Against Nuclear Weapons? The British Case”, *Comparative Strategy*, 20: 3, 2010, p. 233.

## Conservative Policy

The Conservative Party currently maintains strong support for a like-for-like renewal of Trident and the maintenance of the strategy of continuous-at-sea deterrence (CASD), as declared in its 2010 election manifesto.<sup>9</sup> Whilst there are notable individuals within the Party who have been sceptical about the need for Britain to retain nuclear weapons, mindful of the associated opportunity costs for other military capabilities, such opinion represents a small minority within the Party. In the 2007 Parliamentary debate the leadership along with most Conservative MPs fully supported the Labour Government's proposals (the vote depended upon their support). Since coming to power the Party has continued the previous government's dual-strategy of Trident replacement alongside diplomatic leadership in encouraging multilateral disarmament. Nevertheless, it has had to balance its support for like-for-like replacement with its coalition partner's scepticism. As a result, then Defence Secretary, Liam Fox, declared that the new government would "maintain Britain's nuclear deterrent" but also evaluate the current system "to ensure value for money" and undertake a review of alternatives to a direct like-for-like replacement of the current Trident system.<sup>10</sup>

The government has proceeded as planned with the 'concept and assessment' phase for the successor submarine project, and took it through MoD's 'Initial Gate' spending decision in May 2011.<sup>11</sup> In May 2012 the government announced £350 million of contracts for the first 18-months of the assessment phase,<sup>12</sup> and in June 2012 authorised a £1.1 billion contract for refurbishment of the Rolls Royce submarine nuclear propulsion plant facility in Derby and long-lead items for the production of the core for the reactor for the seventh Astute-class boat and the first successor-class boat.<sup>13</sup> The government plans to place an order for the specialist high-grade steel for the successor submarines in 2014 so that it is ready for manufacture and cutting in 2016 after the main gate decision is taken.<sup>14</sup> Spending on the concept phase up to initial gate was £900 million. Projected spending from initial gate in 2011 to the main gate decision in 2016 is £3 billion.<sup>15</sup> These decisions have caused tension between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in the coalition. Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg claimed in October 2012 that it was crystal clear no final decision on Trident renewal would be taken until 2016, and warned his coalition partners against 'jumping the gun'.<sup>16</sup> Defence Secretary Philip Hammond responded by saying that it was clear already there were no credible alternatives that could be cheaper.<sup>17</sup>

9 2010 Conservative Party Manifesto. Available at: <<http://www.conservatives.com/~media/Files/Activist%20Centre/Press%20and%20Policy/Manifestos/Manifesto2010>>.

10 Conservative Party Policy Document. "What We Stand For". Available at <[http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where\\_we\\_stand/Defence.aspx](http://www.conservatives.com/Policy/Where_we_stand/Defence.aspx)> and Ministry of Defence "Review Into Costs of Trident". Available at <<http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/DefenceNews/DefencePolicyAndBusiness/ReviewIntoCostsOfTrident.htm>>.

11 Ministry of Defence, "The United Kingdom's Future Nuclear Deterrent: The Submarine. Initial Gate Parliamentary Report", May 2011. Available at <[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/27399/submarine\\_initial\\_gate.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27399/submarine_initial_gate.pdf)>.

12 House of Commons, *Official Report*, 22 May 2012, Col. 54WS.

13 House of Commons, *Official Report*, 18 June 2012. Available at: <<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm120618/debtext/120618-0001.htm>>.

14 House of Commons, *Official Report*, 7 December 2011, Col. 149HW.

15 House of Commons, *Official Report*, 13 July 2013, Col. 412W.

16 BBC report, 'Trident: Nick Clegg warns against 'jumping the gun' on decision', 29 October 2012. Available at <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-20116648>>.

17 Richard Norton-Taylor, *The Guardian*, 'Philip Hammond fuels row with Nick Clegg on Trident', 1 November 2012.

One important qualification to the Conservative front bench's support for replacement was the new Chancellor's insistence in July 2010 that the capital cost of procuring a new generation of ballistic missile submarines would come entirely out of the defence budget.<sup>18</sup> This was at a time when the coalition's 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review cut MoD's cumulative real growth by 7.5% over 2010-11 to 2014-15.<sup>19</sup> This had important implications for the opportunity costs of the project and changed some views on Trident replacement within the Ministry of Defence. Four years earlier a Communicate Research Poll of MPs had asked whether the Treasury rather than the MoD should pay for any replacement of the strategic nuclear weapons capability. Conservative MPs were split down the middle with 44% agreeing and 38% disagreeing.<sup>20</sup> Contrary to popular belief, the costs of the original Trident programme were also met by MoD. In July 1980, for example, then Defence Secretary Francis Pym made a statement to the House on the replacement of Polaris with Trident in which he stated:

*"We estimate the capital cost of a four-boat force, at today's prices, as up to £5 billion, spread over 15 years. We expect rather over half of the expenditure to fall in the 1980s. We intend to accommodate this within the defence budget in the normal way, alongside our other major force improvements... the provision of the strategic deterrent has always been part of normal defence budgeting."*

18 G. Vina and K. Donaldson, 'Cameron Backs Osborne in Cabinet Split over Trident Nuclear Force Funding', Bloomberg 30 July 2010. Available at <<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2010-07-30/cameron-backs-osborne-in-cabinet-split-over-trident-nuclear-force-funding.html>>.

19 HM Treasury, *Spending Review 2010*, Cm 7942, (London: HMSO, October 2010), p. 10

20 Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs had been clearer in their support for the costs to be covered by the defence budget: 65% and 59% respectively. See <[http://www.comres.co.uk/polls/Nuclear\\_Deterrence.pdf](http://www.comres.co.uk/polls/Nuclear_Deterrence.pdf)>.

21 House of Commons, *Official Report*, 15 July 1980, Columns 1236- 1251.

*It is a weapons system, like any other weapons system – ships, tanks, or whatever it may be. Within the defence budget this can and will be accommodated in the same way as Polaris was accommodated 10 to 20 years ago."*<sup>21</sup>

This was offset by a 3 per cent real growth in MoD's budget up to 1985/86 to cover some of the cost.<sup>22</sup> This time, however, the Trident replacement programme cannot be supported by an increase in the defence budget at a time of sharp cuts in public spending.

The Conservative-led coalition not only continued the policy of replacement, but also recognised the responsibility to engage on the new disarmament agenda in the international arena. One of the first acts of the newly-appointed Foreign Secretary, William Hague, was to announce for the first time a limit on the overall UK nuclear weapons stockpile of 225 warheads and a review of declaratory nuclear policy as an important UK contribution to the final week of the 2010 NPT Review Conference at the UN in New York that had been in session as the election was conducted and the new government took power. Hague, as Opposition Foreign Secretary, had previously given two speeches prioritising measures to strengthen global non-proliferation norms and practices, and explicitly recognising the need to show serious political commitment to multilateral nuclear disarmament, along with a commitment to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons.<sup>23</sup> In 2008, he said:

*"... Addressing the existence of stockpiles of nuclear weapons is an integral part of efforts to reduce the risks of nuclear weapons and a fundamental commitment under the NPT, which requires "negotiations in good faith on effective measures" on nuclear disarmament and on "a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control."*

22 House of Commons Defence Committee, *Strategic Nuclear Weapons Policy*, HC 266 (London: HMSO, 1982), para. 70.

23 See speeches by William Hague to IISS in June 2006 and July 2008. Available at <<http://www.iiss.org.uk/recent-key-addresses/william-hague-address-jul-08/>>.



*“... there needs to be strategic dialogue between Britain, the United States, France, Russia and China on how to achieve future reductions in nuclear stockpiles, on ways to reduce further the risk of nuclear confrontation or accidental nuclear war, and how to make progress on our disarmament commitments in a way that strengthens the NPT.”*

*“... Reducing the risk posed by weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons in particular is not a party political issue but a vital national interest which needs a common purpose and shared vision.”*

The results of the declaratory policy review and the value for money review were announced alongside the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) in October 2010. The SDSR also set out further reductions in nuclear warheads, a reduction in the missile capacity of the next generation ballistic missile submarines, and a decision to extend the life of the current Vanguard-class submarines by a further four years, thus moving the key ‘Main Gate’ spending decision on the new submarines into the next parliament in 2016. In sum, the Conservative leadership has been comfortable with pursuing the Trident replacement programme as planned alongside additional reductions in UK nuclear capability and a tightening of declaratory policy along similar lines to those outlined in the Obama administration’s Nuclear Posture Review released in April 2010, together with a more reluctant endorsement of a value for money review and formal alternatives review.

## Liberal Democrat Policy

The Liberal Democrat Party has always had a strong anti-nuclear element within it but its leadership has ensured the Party remained in favour of Britain retaining a nuclear weapons capability. This resolve has, however, come under question more recently. Party leader and future Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg commissioned Sir Menzies Campbell in 2009 to conduct a review of options for replacing the current Trident system, which reported four weeks before the election.<sup>24</sup> Nick Clegg stated his belief that this review provided proof of ‘credible alternatives’ to a like-for-like replacement.<sup>25</sup> While studiously avoiding any explicit policy recommendations beyond the need for further review, the study called into question the claim from the 2006 White Paper of the possibility of the emergence of a future strategic threat in the next 20-25 years, the need for a nuclear ‘insurance policy’ based on the current Trident system,<sup>26</sup> the necessity of a continuous-at-sea deterrence (CASD) nuclear posture, and a nuclear force structure still shaped by the ‘Moscow Criterion,’ and suggested the possibility of extending the life of the current class of Vanguard submarines.<sup>27</sup> It outlined possible alternatives such as the use of dual-capable Astute submarines that could deploy conventional as well as nuclear-armed cruise missiles, as well as a ‘virtual’ nuclear capability based on a disarmed system with a residual and credible capability to reconstitute nuclear warheads and a delivery system within a specific timeframe should an existential military threat to the country re-emerge.<sup>28</sup>

24 Menzies Campbell, “Policy Options for the Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Weapons”, April 2010. Available at <http://www.libdems.org.uk/siteFiles/resources/docs/News/MCTrident%20Review.pdf>.

25 Quoted in Liberal Democrat Party Update. “Menzies Campbell Launches Review of UK Nuclear Weapons”. 3 April, 2010. Available at: [http://www.libdems.org.uk/news\\_detail.aspx?title=Menzies\\_Campbell\\_launches\\_review\\_of\\_UK\\_nuclear\\_weapons&pPK=691e8ca2-8766-450b-a3ce-400f214cc641](http://www.libdems.org.uk/news_detail.aspx?title=Menzies_Campbell_launches_review_of_UK_nuclear_weapons&pPK=691e8ca2-8766-450b-a3ce-400f214cc641).

26 Menzies Campbell, “Policy Options for the Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Weapons”, p. 23.

27 Ibid., p. 4.

28 Ibid., p. 5.

Clegg decided that the Party would go into the 2010 general election explicitly opposing a like-for-like replacement of the Trident system but without committing to a specific alternative or ruling out nuclear disarmament. The Party's 2010 manifesto outlined a strategy to cut the deficit that included "saying no to the like-for-like replacement of the Trident nuclear weapons system, which could cost £100 billion. We will hold a full defence review to establish the best alternative for Britain's future security",<sup>29</sup> clearly leaving open the possibility relinquishing nuclear weapons entirely. Clegg sought to use this policy to set the Liberal Democrats apart from the Conservative and Labour Parties. The party leadership also insisted that the Trident replacement programme be included in the defence and security review that all the main Westminster parties had committed to undertake after the election.

Following the failure of Labour or the Conservatives to win a majority of seats in the 2010 election, the latter opted for a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. This was facilitated by a Coalition Agreement that confirmed the coalition would proceed with the Trident replacement programme as planned but that "the renewal of Trident should be scrutinised to ensure value for money. Liberal Democrats will continue to make the case for alternatives".<sup>30</sup>

29 2010 Liberal Democrat Manifesto. Available at: <http://issuu.com/libdems/docs/manifesto?mode=embed&layout=http%3A%2F%2Fskin.issuu.com%2Fv%2Fflight%2Flayout.xml&showFlipBtn=true&proShowMenu=true>.

30 The Cabinet Office, 'The Coalition: Our Programme for Government', London, 20 May 2010, p. 15, [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg\\_coalition.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfg_coalition.pdf), date accessed 14 June 2010.

31 'Work on Trident nuclear renewal gets go ahead', *BBC News Online*, 18 May 2011, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-13438420>, date accessed 19 May 2011. The Trident Alternatives terms of reference can be found at <http://www.parliament.uk/deposits/depositedpapers/2011/DEP2011-0825.zip>, date accessed 14 September 2011.

In May 2011 agreement was reached between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats that the Government would conduct an 18-month assessment of 'credible alternatives' to a like-for-like replacement led by the Cabinet Office and Liberal Democrat Armed Forces Minister Nick Harvey and report to both the Prime Minister David Cameron and Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg.<sup>31</sup> Harvey lost his post in a Cabinet reshuffle in September 2012 following which responsibility for the Trident Alternatives Study was passed first to David Laws and then to Chief Secretary to the Treasury, Danny

Alexander. Support has since grown within the Liberal Democrats for abandoning continuous-at-sea deterrence, questioning the need for a nuclear system designed to destroy Russia's major cities, and considering development of a dual-capable Astute class submarine with nuclear-armed cruise missiles as the basis for a follow-on to Trident.<sup>32</sup> David Cameron's view

remained that "the Liberal Democrats are absolutely entitled to use the time between now and 2016 to look at alternatives, from looking at those alternatives I do not think that any of them would give us the assurance of having a full-service nuclear deterrent with the Trident submarine and missile system. I do not think the alternatives come up to scratch in anything like the ways some of their proponents propose, but under our coalition agreement he is free to continue to look at that. The programme for replacing Trident is on track and going ahead."<sup>33</sup>

32 A. Grice, "Lib Dems Push for 'Stand-by' Trident Replacement Deal", *The Independent*, 19 July 2012, Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/lib-dems-push-for-standby-trident-replacement-deal-7956987.html>.

33 House of Commons, Official Report, 19 October 2010, Column 807.

*Support has since grown within the Liberal Democrats for abandoning continuous-at-sea deterrence, questioning the need for a nuclear system designed to destroy Russia's major cities*

## Labour policy

Labour briefly outlined its current policy in the consultation document that launched its Shadow Defence Review in February 2012:

*“While nuclear weapons exist, we cannot leave ourselves and our children open to the threat of nuclear blackmail. Labour remains committed to the position set out in the 2006 White Paper to replace the current Vanguard class submarines and Trident missile system. We remain committed also to our commitments under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty and will work towards a world free of nuclear weapons. This review does not specifically consider the issue of Trident renewal, but Labour is committed to examining the findings of the Government’s ‘Trident Alternatives Review’ and will also assess the findings of the Basic Trident Commission.”*<sup>34</sup>

Attitudes within the Labour Party towards this issue are heavily influenced by a collective interpretation of the Party’s experience in the 1980s. Many in the Party believe they lost two general elections (1983 and 1987) because of their policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament. A residual fear of being seen by the electorate as ‘soft’ on defence has shaped subsequent Labour attitudes to defence and security, including nuclear security. In 1987 Labour leader Neil Kinnock accepted the need to jettison the electorally unpopular unilateral disarmament policy in favour of negotiated, multilateral nuclear disarmament with the other established nuclear powers. This began a long process of transforming the Party’s foreign and defence policy to one in which it was seen as strong on defence. This meant supporting Trident and Britain’s status as a nuclear weapon power albeit whilst pursuing multilateral nuclear disarmament, and further reductions in its nuclear arsenal.<sup>35</sup>

This was largely complete by 1997 when the party was elected to power under Tony Blair.<sup>36</sup> It was reflected in Labour’s 1998 Strategic Defence Review, which stated that “while large nuclear arsenals and risks of proliferation remain, our minimum deterrent remains a necessary element of our security” but that “We will retain our nuclear deterrent with fewer warheads to meet our twin challenges of minimum credible deterrence backed by a firm commitment to arms control”.<sup>37</sup> There was perceived to be little domestic political payoff in being the government to renounce British possession of nuclear weapons.

In December 2006 towards the end of Tony Blair’s premiership his government announced its decision to start the process of replacing the Trident system, beginning with the procurement of a new fleet of ballistic missile submarines. The decision was outlined in some detail in the White Paper on The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent.<sup>38</sup> Blair was committed to the UK remaining a nuclear weapon power. He stated in his memoirs published in 2010 that, “the expense is huge, and the utility in a post-cold war world is less in terms of deterrence, and non-existent in terms of military use”, and that the “common sense and practical argument” against Trident was strong, but abandoning nuclear weapons would be “too big a downgrading of our status as a nation” and in an uncertain world “too big a risk for our defence”.<sup>39</sup>

34 Available at  
<<http://www.labour.org.uk/uploads/0816d8a8-a26a-8384-bdef-ef79b07edebe.pdf>>.

35 Darren Lilleker, ‘Labour’s defence policy: from unilateralism to strategic review’, in R Little and M. Wickham-Jones (eds.), *New Labour’s Foreign Policy: A New Moral Crusade?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 231

36 Len Stott, ‘Labour and the Bomb: The first 80 Years’, *International Affairs* 82: 4, 2006, pp. 685-700.

37 *Strategic Defence Review*, Defence White Paper, Cm 3999 (London: Ministry of Defence, July 1998).

38 Ministry of Defence (MOD) and Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO), *The Future of the United Kingdom’s Nuclear Deterrent*, Cm 6994 (London: HMSO, 2006).

39 Tony Blair, *A Journey* (London: Random House), p. 636.

However, the White Paper also discussed whether CASD could be maintained with three, rather than four, submarines given advances in submarines and reactor technology. Later, in a speech to the UN General Assembly in September 2009, Prime Minister Gordon Brown implied to some surprise that the decision had already been taken to go down to three boats for the new fleet.<sup>40</sup>

When Ed Miliband was elected leader of the Party after the 2010 general election, Labour called for Trident to be included in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) already underway. He issued a statement warning that the UK now “[needs] to look very carefully at whether renewing Trident is the necessary or the right thing to do”.<sup>41</sup> Eric Joyce, former Parliamentary Private Secretary to then Defence Secretary, Bob Ainsworth, claimed in 2010 that Ed Miliband could be persuaded that there is no practical reason for the renewal of Trident, and that it would be tactically disadvantageous for the Labour Party to enter the next election outflanked on the issue.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Miliband asserted in 2010 that there is a “continuous case for Britain to retain an independent nuclear deterrent”.<sup>43</sup> He inherited a 2010 election manifesto declaration that although “a Strategic Defence Review will look at all areas of defence...*we will maintain our nuclear deterrent*. We will fight for *multilateral disarmament*, working for a world free of nuclear weapons...”.<sup>44</sup>

40 United Nations. “Speech to General Assembly by Prime Minister, Mr. Gordon Brown 23 September 2009”. Available at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/GB\\_en.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/GB_en.pdf).

41 A. Grice, “Lib Dems Push for ‘Stand-by’ Trident Replacement Deal”, *The Independent*, 19 July 2012. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/lib-dems-push-for-standby-trident-replacement-deal-7956987.html>.

42 Speech at CND meeting on the side-lines of the 2010 Labour Conference, published in Wheeler, B., 27 September 2010. “Ed Miliband Wants Trident Rethink – Ex-Defence Minister”. *BBC*. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-11423362>.

There is nevertheless an active debate in the Party as to whether to replace Trident and, if so, how. Former defence secretary and NATO Secretary General George Robertson, for example, is firmly in favour of a like-for-like replacement, whilst another former defence secretary, Des Browne, is in favour of dropping CASD but still retaining nuclear weapons, and former Chief Whip Nick Brown and many backbenchers support relinquishing nuclear weapons altogether.<sup>45</sup> It is worth recalling that 88 Labour MPs voted against the Labour government’s March 2007 motion to begin the Trident replacement process and a further 30 were absent (most Liberal Democrat MPs voted against but the government carried the motion by 409-161 votes). Miliband confirmed at the Party Conference in October 2012 that the Party’s policy on Trident replacement will be reviewed after the publication of the Trident Alternatives Study and the BASIC Trident Commission report stating “We need to look at what are the arguments around the Trident upgrade, how soon does it have to happen and what are the alternatives, and I think that is the right way forward”.<sup>46</sup>

43 Quoted in the Labour Leadership Newsletter Summer 2010. Available at: <http://labourcnd.org.uk>.

44 2010 Labour Manifesto. Available at: <http://www2.labour.org.uk/uploads/TheLabourPartyManifesto-2010.pdf>. (Emphasis added.)

45 John Hutton and George Robertson, “There is no magic alternative to Trident - Britain has got to keep it”, *Daily Telegraph*, 28 February 2013; Des Browne and Ian Kearns, “Trident is no longer key to Britain’s security”, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 February 2013; Nick Brown, “Dropping Trident will lead to a richer, safer Britain”, *The New Statesman*, 21 June 2013. Available at <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/06/labour-needs-drop-trident-richer-safer-britain>.

46 See Northwest Evening Mail, “Work Needed on Sub Plans”, 5 October 2012. Available at <http://www.nwemail.co.uk/news/work-needed-on-sub-plans-1.1002640?referrerPath=>> and [defencemanagement.com](http://www.defencemanagement.com) that reports on Miliband’s comments at fringe meeting available at [http://www.defencemanagement.com/news\\_story.asp?id=21058](http://www.defencemanagement.com/news_story.asp?id=21058).



## Smaller Parties

The Scottish National Party has been strongly against Trident renewal in any form, with no sign of divergence within the Party.<sup>47</sup> SNP Defence Spokesperson, Angus Robertson, summed up the party's position in June 2012: "people in Scotland do not want Trident. Church leaders, the Scottish Trades Union Council, the Scottish government and Scotland's parliament are all against weapons of mass destruction being in our waters."<sup>48</sup> Trident and UK nuclear weapons policy has a strong political symbolism for the Party and its supporters. The SNP's position is one of principle, but it also reflects a tactical reality that Scottish public opinion is against the deployment of nuclear weapons, and that the issue can be used as a tool to demonstrate the 'colonial' imposition of a policy determined by officials in London and dependent upon the stationing of nuclear submarines at Scottish bases. If the SNP is successful in persuading the Scottish electorate to vote for independence in September 2014 (opinion polls currently favour a 'no' vote), it could have significant ramifications for the future basing of ballistic missile submarines at Faslane and the nuclear warhead depot at Coulport on the Clyde.

*If the SNP is successful in persuading the Scottish electorate to vote for independence in September 2014, it could have significant ramifications for the future basing of ballistic missile submarines at Faslane and the nuclear warhead depot at Coulport on the Clyde.*

In all likelihood this would involve protracted negotiations over the relocation of these facilities that could face significant budgetary and logistical challenges. However, even with a narrow majority no vote to independence, it is possible that the processes involved in planning for such contingencies could well

strengthen the hand of those in Scotland looking to put greater pressure on the basing of submarines on the Clyde. The on-going long-term risk to the viability of bases in Scotland would have to be factored in by Whitehall defence planners when making substantial new investments in the shore facilities as part of the Trident replacement programme.

Plaid Cymru also has a policy hostile to a UK nuclear weapons capability, but its political leverage is far more limited, except in the highly unlikely event that Milford Haven or other Welsh ports were considered as future alternative bases to Faslane and Coulport.

The Green Party is also resolutely opposed to Britain maintaining nuclear weapons, and has outlined its plans for the country to divest itself of its arsenal and join the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon state.<sup>49</sup>

The UK Independence Party is in favour of renewing the current system.

<sup>47</sup> 2010 Scottish National Party Manifesto, pg. 21 and 2010 Green Party Manifesto. Available at: <[http://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/resources/Manifesto\\_web\\_file.pdf](http://www.greenparty.org.uk/assets/files/resources/Manifesto_web_file.pdf)>.

<sup>48</sup> Speech published in Nicholas Watt, "Coalition Faces Split over Trident Nuclear Replacement", *The Guardian*, 17 June 2012. Available at: <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2012/jun/17/coalition-split-trident-nuclear-submarines-replacement>> and 2010 Scottish National Party Manifesto, pg 21.

<sup>49</sup> See Green Party, Policies for a Sustainable Society, PD406-410. Available at <<http://policy.greenparty.org.uk/pd>>.



## Part 2: Trident and public opinion

Public opinion on UK nuclear weapons, or more specifically party political perceptions of public opinion, is central to the political debate. This part of the report examines the data on British public views on UK nuclear weapons through the many opinion polls and surveys conducted since the debate on whether or not to replace Trident began around 2004/05, including a new survey commissioned by the University of York for this research. The starting gun for the debate was fired in the 2003 Defence White Paper on Delivering Security in a Changing World. The paper announced that “Decisions on whether to replace Trident are not needed this Parliament but are likely to be required in the next one [i.e. after the 2005 general election]. We will therefore continue to take appropriate steps to ensure that the range of options for maintaining a nuclear deterrent capability is kept open until that decision point.”<sup>50</sup> Preliminary work began soon after that announcement, with then Defence Secretary Geoff Hoon noting in July 2004 that “Work on a range of options for maintaining a nuclear deterrent capability is in hand”.<sup>51</sup>

*Public opinion on UK nuclear weapons, or more specifically party political perceptions of public opinion, is central to the political debate.... There is a clear divergence of opinion on whether or not the UK should replace the current Trident system.*

The section draws on over 20 opinion polls conducted since then. It outlines key trends and suggests some political implications for the three main Westminster parties. Details of each poll are found in the Appendix including URLs for access to primary poll data. Caveats are required when comparing and contrasting diverse poll data. First, identification of trends across polls is interpretive not statistical. Longitudinal statistical analysis would require asking methodologically comparable cohorts a uniform set of questions over time. This is not the case with the collection of polls examined here. The polls ask different, though sometimes quite similar, questions and provide different contexts to those questions. The charts below give an indication of the type of question asked but for exact wording please refer to the primary data accessed through the poll URLs in the Appendix. Second, the data are recorded in different ways. Some polls record voting intention and gender, others do not. Most polls record data by age group, but the age categories vary. Sample size varies across the polls and some are targeted at British adults whilst others are limited to Scottish adults. Nevertheless, the polls do highlight a number of important trends.

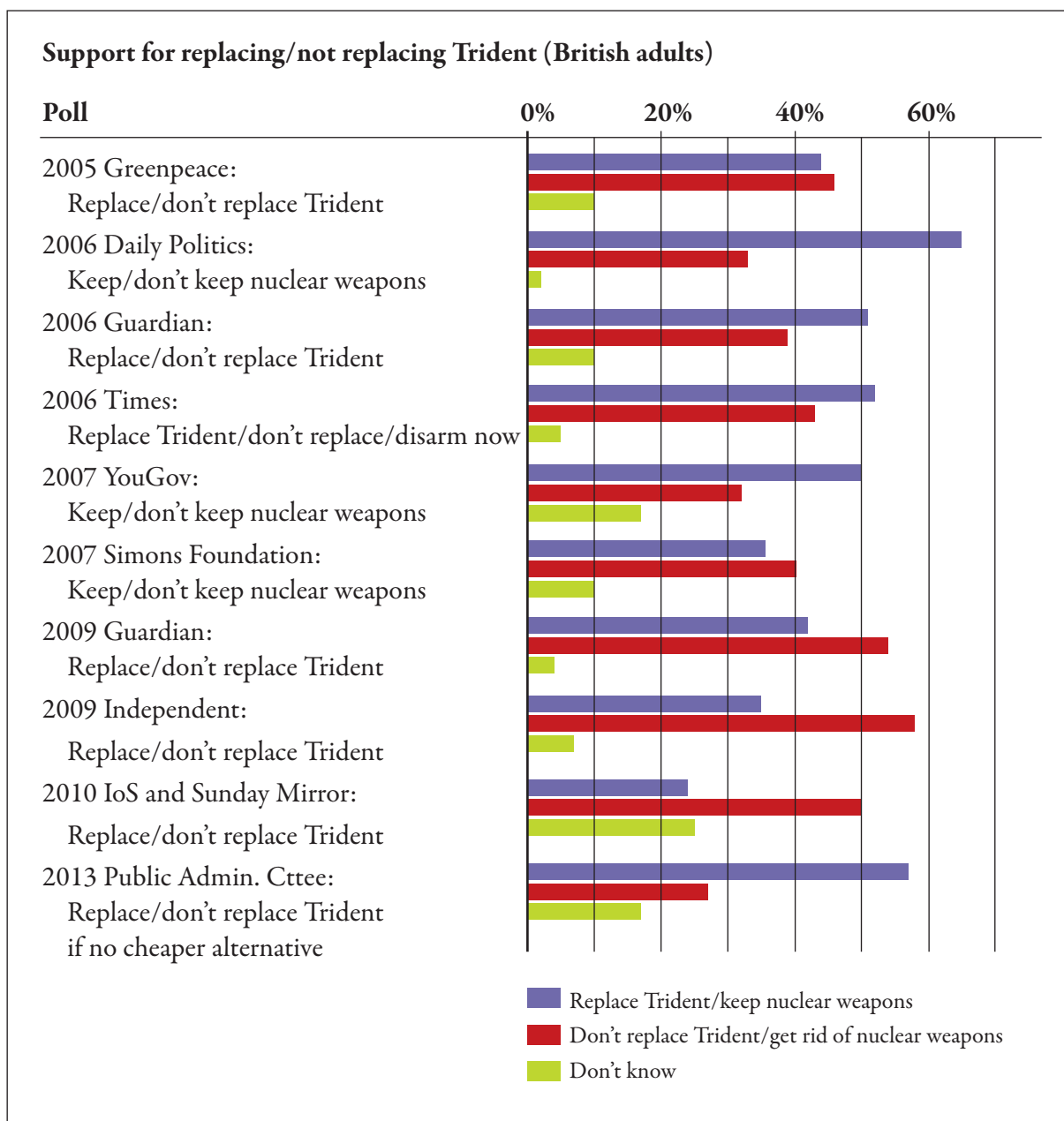
<sup>50</sup> Ministry of Defence (2003) *Delivering Security in a Changing World*, Cm 6401-I (London: HMSO), p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> House of Commons, *Official Report*, 19 July 2004, Column 32W.

## 1. Support for Trident replacement

There is a clear divergence of opinion on whether or not the UK should replace the current Trident system. Polls suggest British opinion may have moved from majority support for replacing Trident to majority support against replacement.

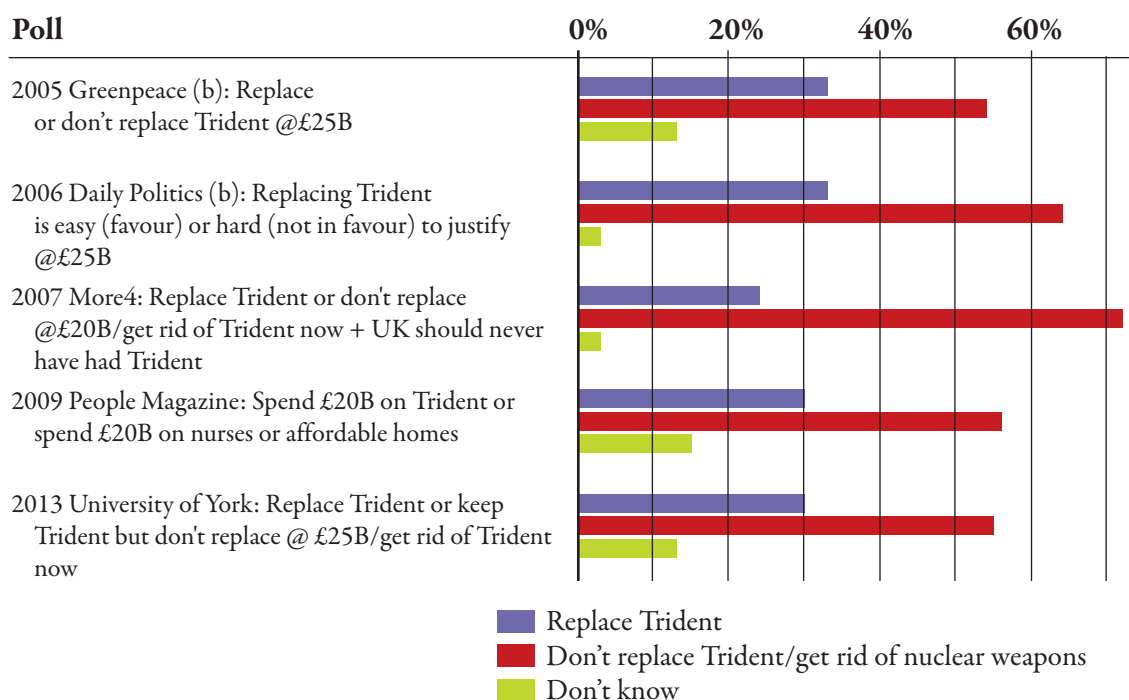
However a recent poll for the House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee suggests majority support for replacing Trident if a cheaper alternative cannot be found.



Opinion in favour of not replacing Trident tends to increase when respondents are presented with a recapitalisation cost of £20-25bn. As Greenpeace's report based on an October 2005 poll conducted by MORI observes: "Public support for replacing Trident is strongly (if not completely) influenced by the context in which the question is posed.

If alternative uses for the money are suggested, especially if it could be used to fund additional public services, there is greater opposition to financing Trident's replacement from the public purse."<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, Lord Ashcroft's 2013 survey of Scottish adults found little change in support for or against Trident replacement after cost was introduced to the survey questions.

## Support for replacing/not replacing Trident @ £20-25bn (British adults)

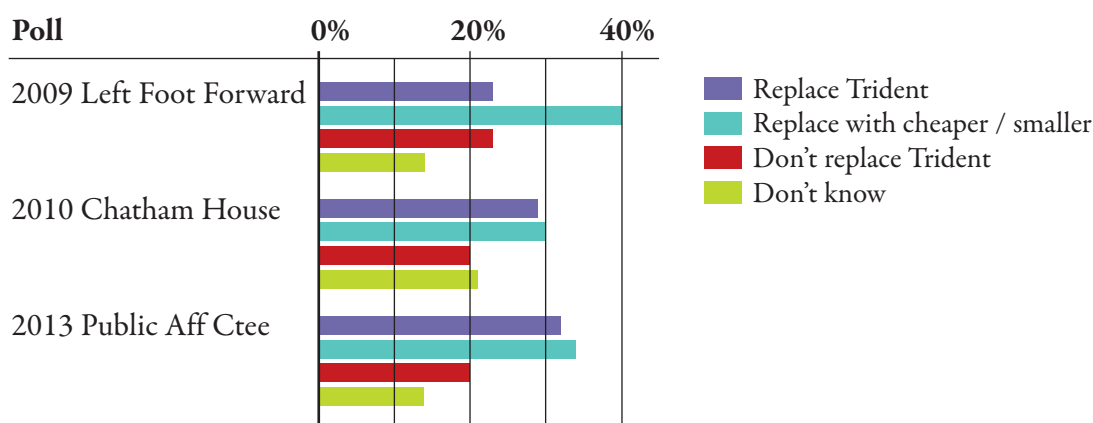


## 2. A smaller, cheaper option

In the context of the government's Trident Alternatives Study, this picture is complicated by the introduction of a third option of a smaller, cheaper alternative to a like-for-like replacement of the current system in three polls of British adults: Left Foot Forward (2009), Chatham House (2010), and Public Administration Select Committee (2013).

Data from these polls suggest a clear majority in favour of retaining some form of nuclear capability but only a third to a fifth in favour of a like-for-like replacement, particularly when respondents are given a figure for the cost ranging from £20-£25 billion. Interestingly, the number of respondents registering 'don't know' increases considerably when the option of a smaller, cheaper system is introduced compared to polls that provide a straight-forward choice of replace or don't replace Trident.

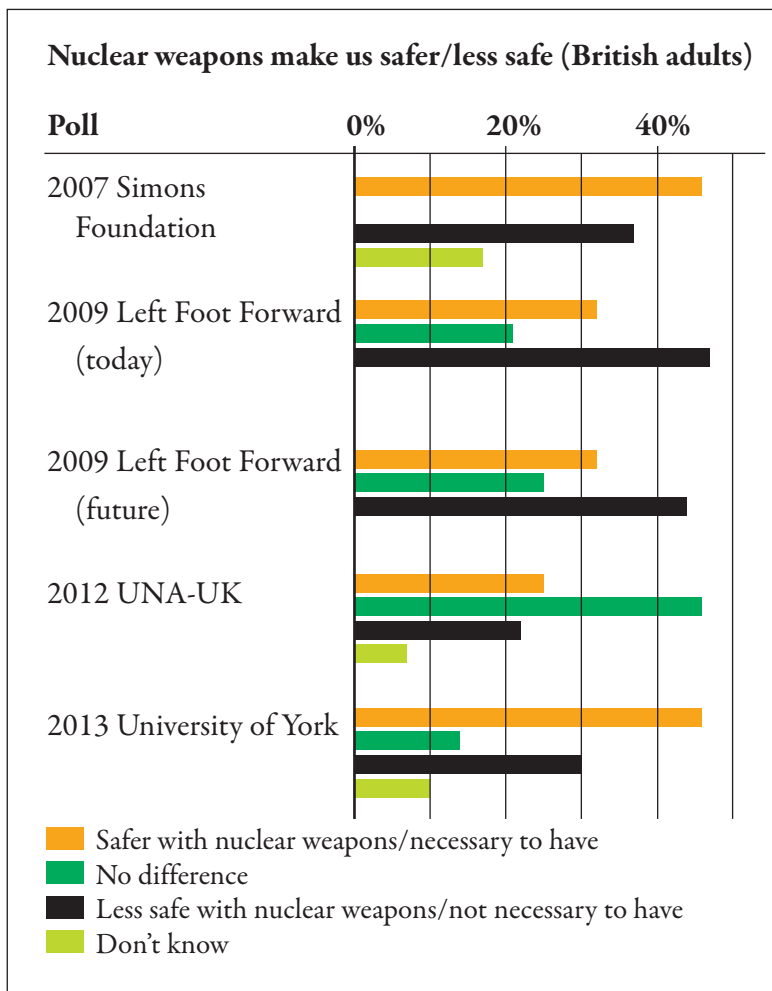
## Support for a smaller, cheaper system (British adults)



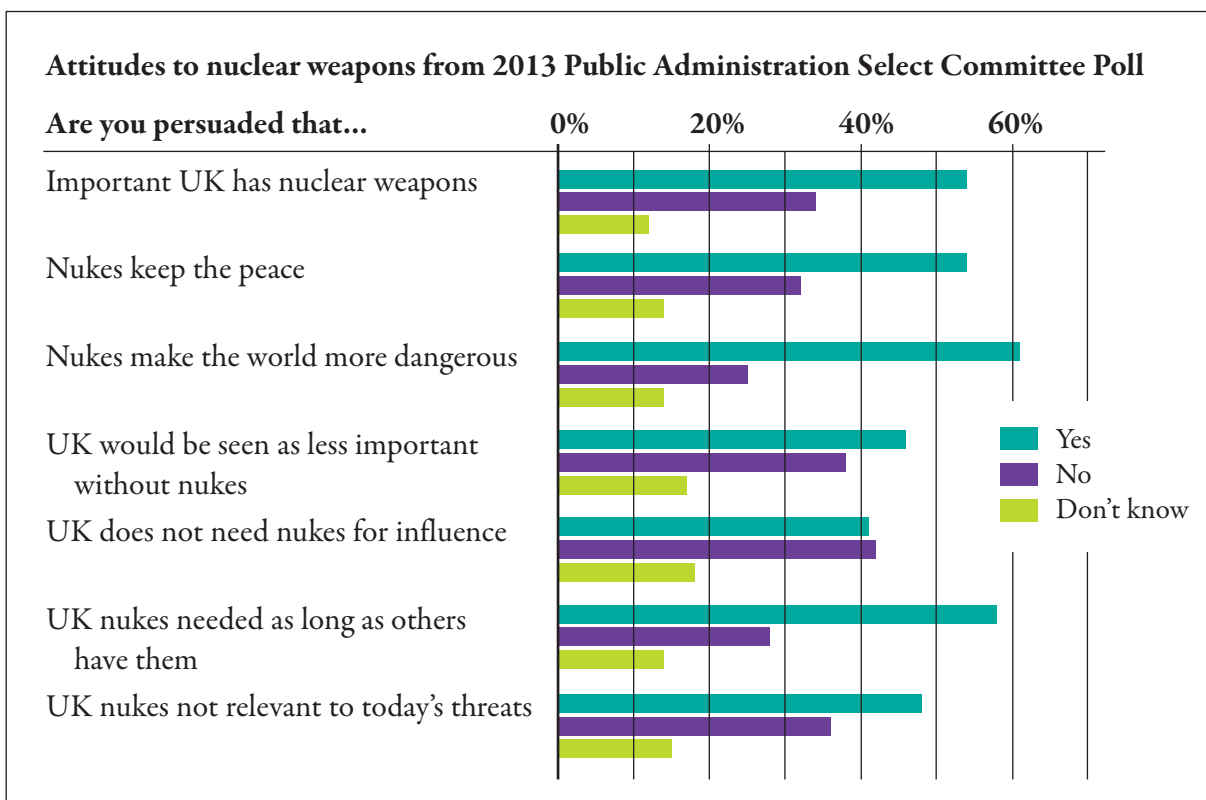
52 'British Attitudes to Nuclear Weapons', survey conducted by MORI for Greenpeace, September 2005, p. 17.

### 3. Do we need nuclear weapons?

Five polls asked British adults whether the country needs nuclear weapons and whether the UK is more or less secure with nuclear weapons. Polls for the Simons Foundation (2007), Left Foot Forward (2009), and UNA-UK (2012) asked whether nuclear weapons make the UK more or less safe. A University of York (2013) poll asked whether nuclear weapons are still necessary and a Public Administration Select Committee poll (2013) asked a range of questions about the necessity of UK nuclear weapons. The polls show a range of outcomes with no clear majority. The 2009 Left Foot Forward poll found a third (32%) of respondents agreeing that nuclear weapons make the UK safer now and will do so in future, with two-thirds agreeing that nuclear weapons either make no difference to UK security or make the UK a less safe and secure place to live.



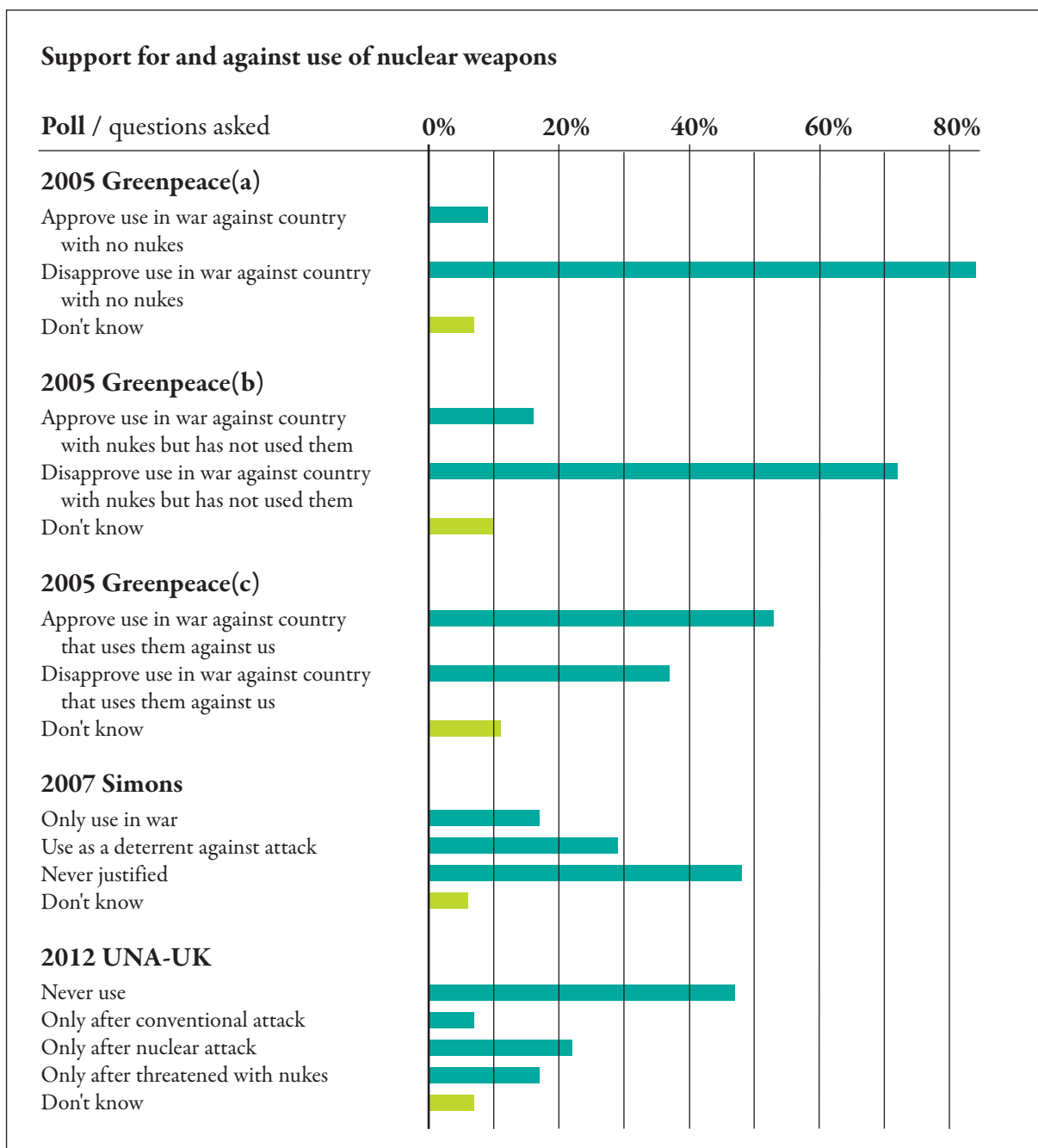
In contrast, polls for the Simons Foundation in 2007 and University of York in 2013 found 46% in agreement that nuclear weapons make the UK safer and more secure – but not a majority.



The Public Affairs Committee poll found slim majorities persuaded by arguments that nuclear weapons keep the peace between industrialised major powers (54%), that having our own nuclear weapons is important (54%), but also that nuclear weapons make the world more dangerous (64%).

#### 4. Should we use nuclear weapons?

Three polls asked respondents the conditions under which they would approve the use of nuclear weapons by the UK – Greenpeace (2005), Simons Foundation (2007), and UNA-UK (2012). The Greenpeace survey registered a small majority in favour of using UK nuclear weapons if attacked with nuclear weapons first (53%). The Simons Foundation found 48% against using nuclear weapons *in any circumstances*. Similarly 47% of respondents in the UNA-UK poll stated that the UK should never use nuclear weapons, with only 22% supporting use if the UK has been attacked with nuclear weapons.

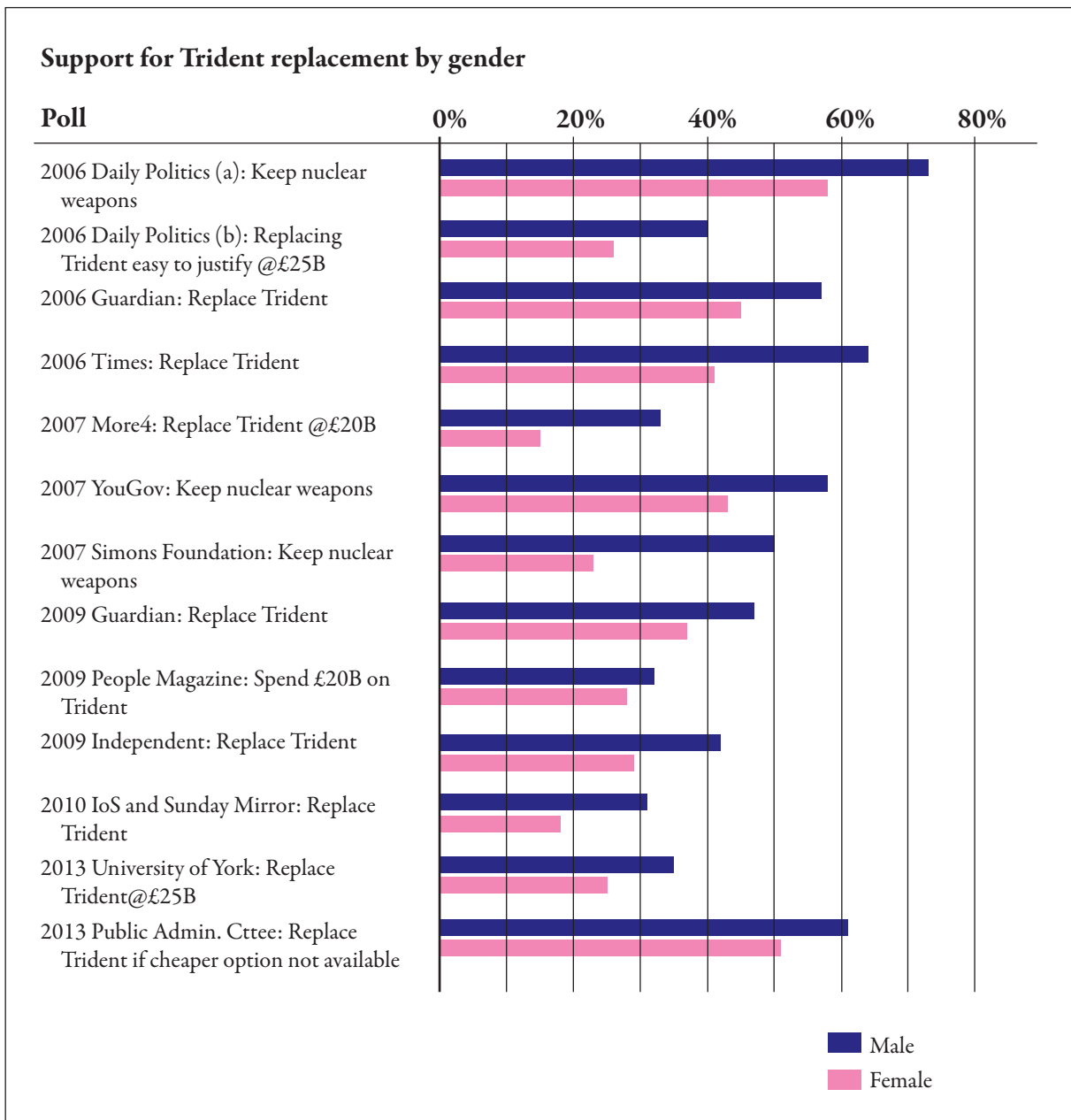




## 5. Variance by gender, age, and voting intention

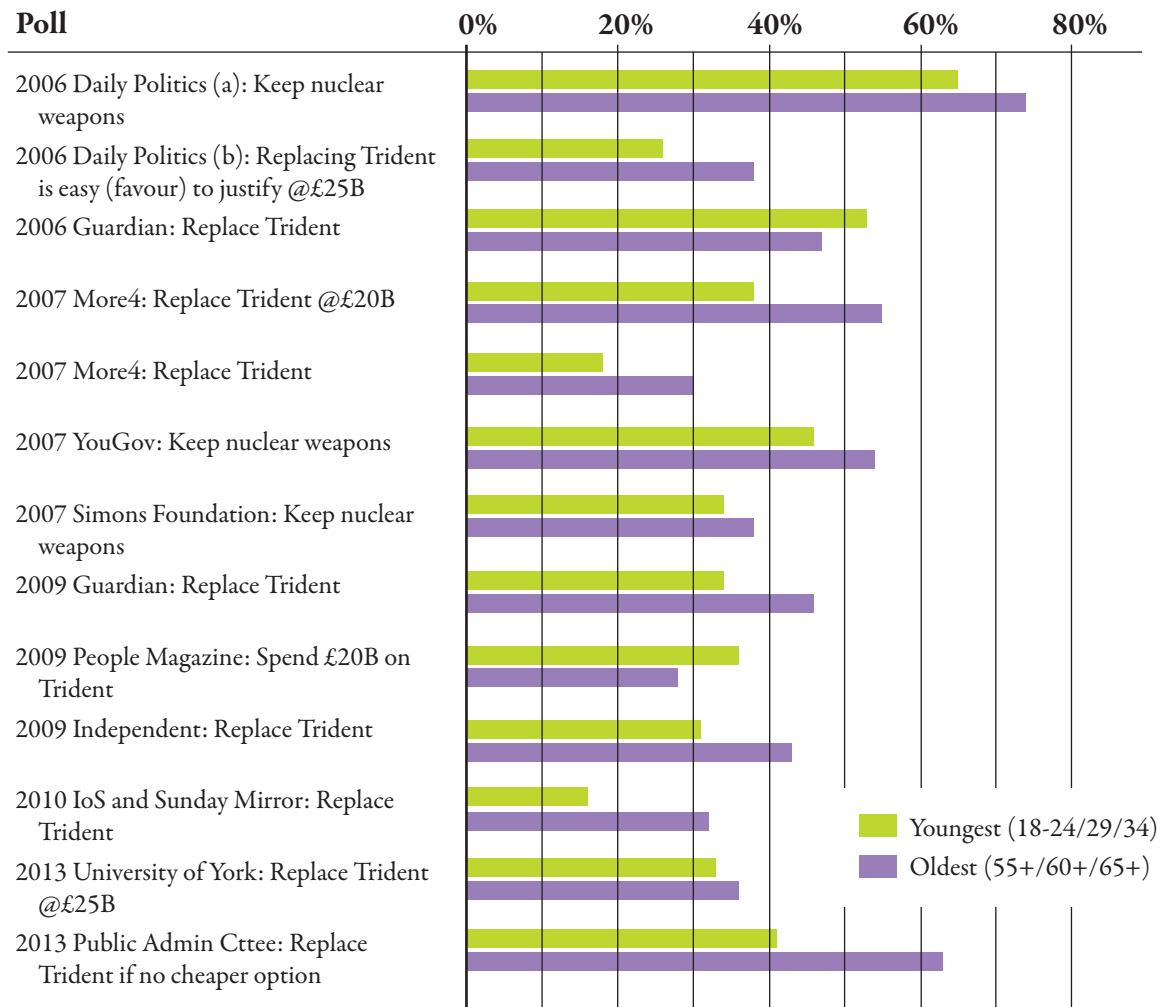
The polls demonstrate that men, those in each poll's older age groups (age ranges vary by survey<sup>53</sup>) and Conservative voters are more likely to favour replacing Trident and are more inclined to think nuclear weapons make the UK a safer place to live. Just under half of these poll show a majority in favour of a like-for-like replacement of Trident in any one of these categories (men, older age group, Conservative voters – notably in the Public Administration Select Committee poll).

The same applies when respondents are asked about a third option of a smaller, cheaper replacement for Trident, whether nuclear weapons make the UK more or less safe, and whether they are necessary or unnecessary for UK security.

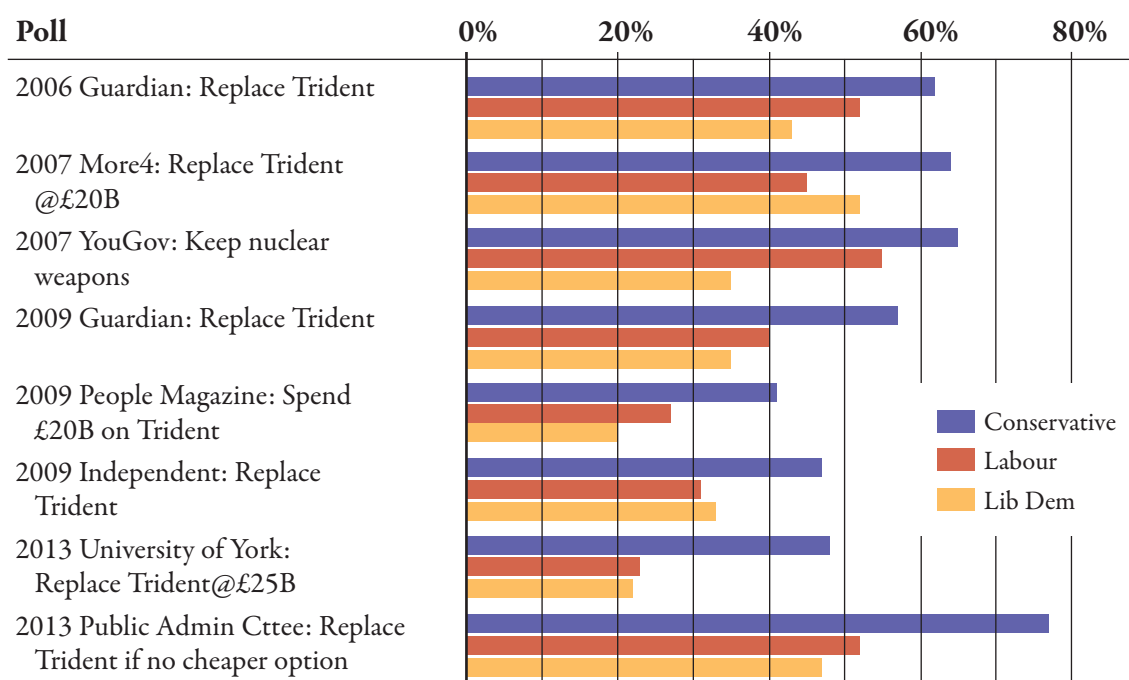


<sup>53</sup> For most polls the youngest age group is 18-24 but for some it's 18-29 or 18-34. Similarly, most polls' oldest age group is 65 and over but for some it's 60 and over, 55 and over, or 50 and over. The charts for this section take each poll's oldest and youngest age group therefore results are not directly comparable across polls.

## Support for Trident replacement by age



## Support for Trident replacement by voting intention

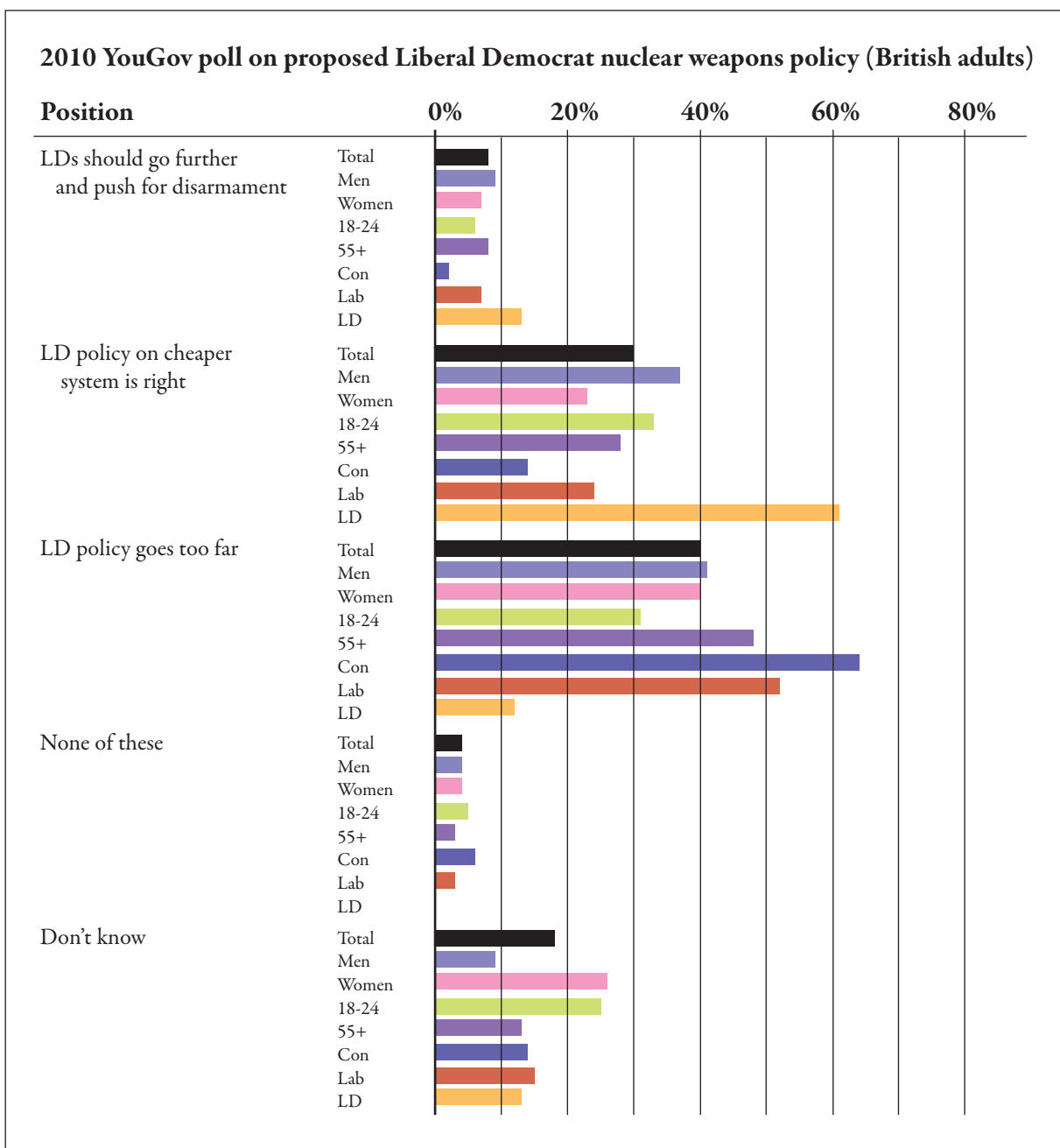


## 6. Party politics

A number of polls ask specific questions in relation to party political positions. A 2009 poll for the Times found that a policy change by the Brown government to relinquish nuclear weapons would have marginally strengthened Labour's chances of winning the 2010 election, though nearly half the respondents were indifferent and thought it would neither strengthen nor undermine Labour's chances.

A 2010 YouGov poll for the Sunday Times asked respondents about Liberal Democrat plans for a scaled down nuclear weapon system to replace Trident.

8% agreed "The Liberal Democrats should go further and say they would get rid of all British nuclear weapons" (2% Conservative, 7% Labour and 13% Liberal Democrat by voting intention), 30% agreed "The Liberal Democrat policy is about right because international circumstances have changed" (14% Conservative, 24% Labour, 61% Liberal Democrat), but 40% agreed "The Liberal Democrat policy goes too far, and would endanger Britain's security" (64% Conservative, 52% Labour, 12% Liberal Democrat, even gender split but 48% 55+ compared to 31% 18-24), with 18% don't know.

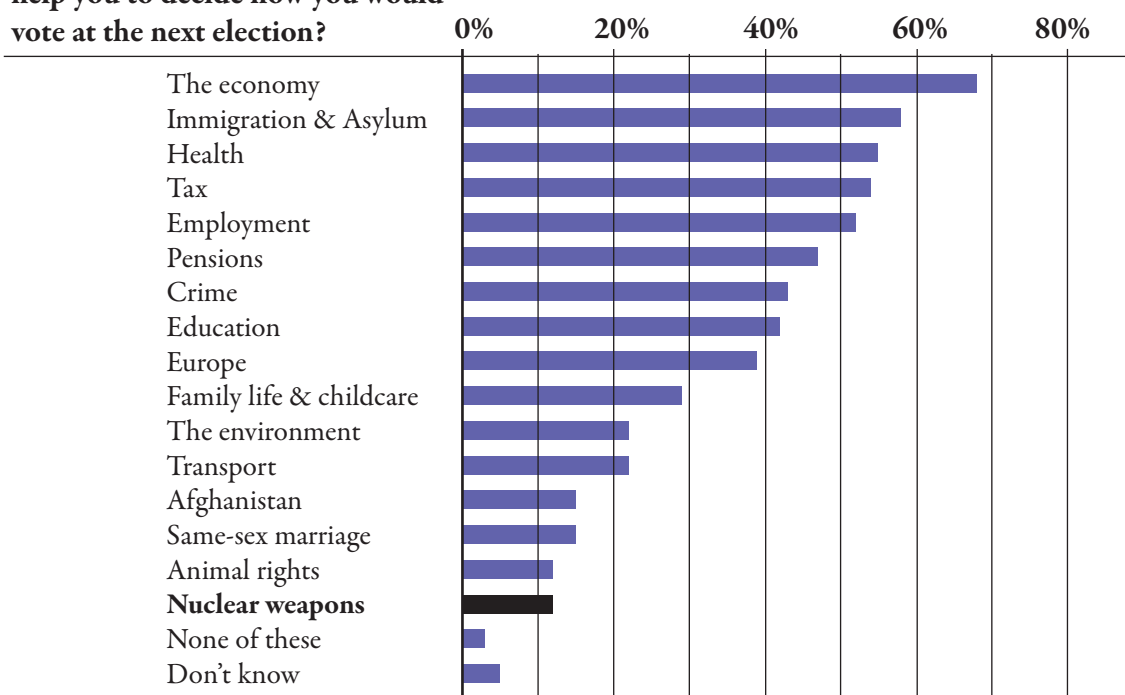


A 2013 poll for the University of York commissioned for this analysis found that only 1 in 8 respondents registered nuclear weapons as an important issue that would shape their vote at the next election. This is a higher percentage than MORI's longitudinal survey of 'Most important issues facing Britain today' in which only 1-2% of respondents register nuclear weapons, but both sets of data indicate that nuclear weapons are not an important political issue for the vast majority of the electorate.

63% of the 1 in 8 that highlighted nuclear weapons said they would support a party that opted for nuclear disarmament. Only 9% of Conservative voters registered nuclear weapons as an electoral issue and of the 63% of respondents that said they would support a party that opted for nuclear disarmament, 25% were Conservative voters. Just under half (48%) of Conservative voters favoured a like-for-like replacement of Trident when asked compared to just 23% and 22% for Labour the Liberal Democrats respectively.

### 2013 University of York key voter issues (British adults)

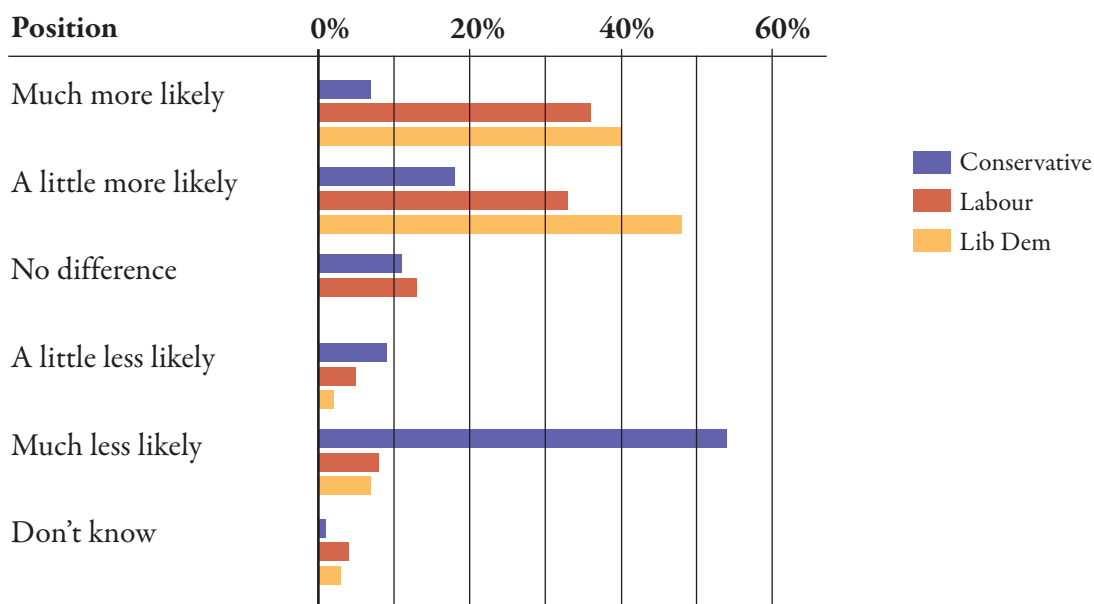
Which, if any, of the following issues would help you to decide how you would vote at the next election?



The low salience of nuclear weapons policy combined with majority support for not proceeding with a like-for-like replacement of the current Trident system arguably gives current and future governments political space to make changes to current policy without incurring loss of public support. It also suggests an absence of public pressure for policy change.

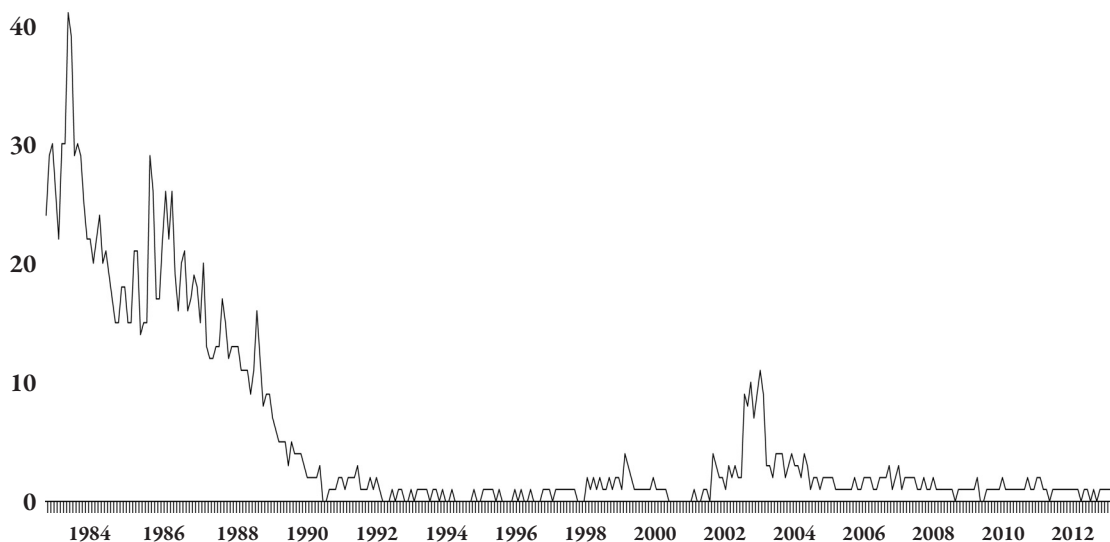
### 2013 University of York: respondents that said nuclear weapons were an issue that would shape their vote by voting intentions (British adults)

Would you be more or less likely to vote for a party that said it would get rid of nuclear weapons if it won at the next election or would it make no difference?



### IPSOS MORI longitudinal survey on key political issues: nuclear weapons

% that state nuclear weapons as an important political issue

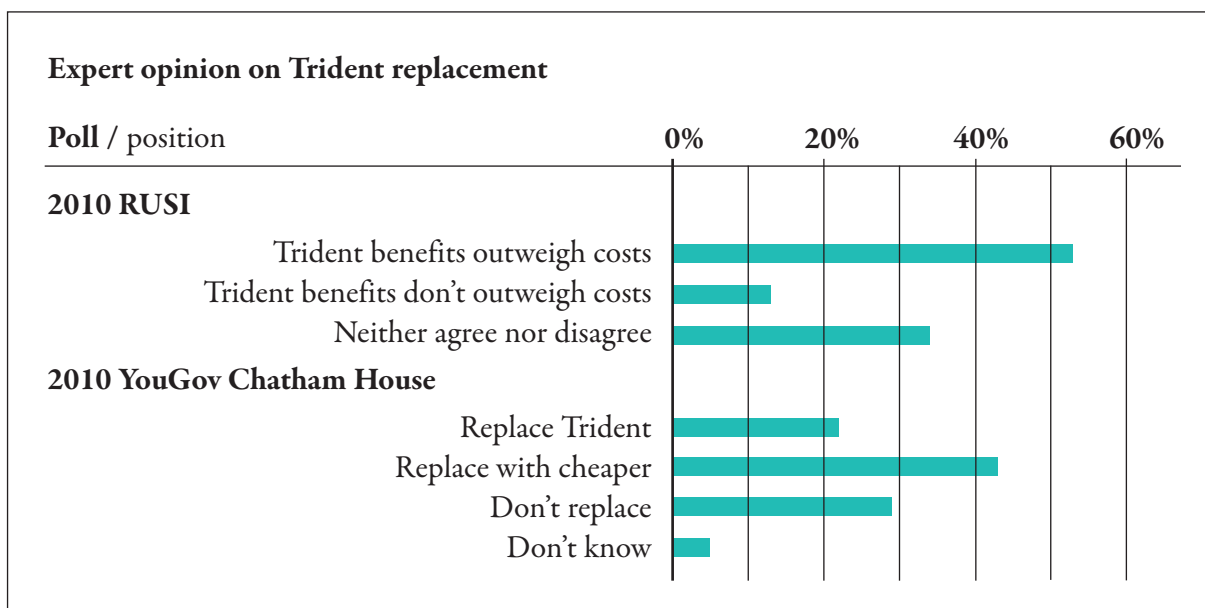




## 7. Expert opinion

These popular views diverge in some ways from surveys of the UK's defence and security elite associated with Chatham House and the Royal United Services Institute. Two non-representative polls of experts for both institutes in 2010 found a majority for RUSI of those that think the benefits of Trident outweigh the costs (53%) compared to those that think the costs outweigh the benefits (13%) or are evenly balanced (34%).

Here, the expert view found more support for Trident than within the general public. The Chatham House poll found a minority in favour of Trident replacement (22%), more in favour of replacing with a cheaper system (43%) with 29% saying the UK should not replace Trident at all. This is in line with the three public opinion polls that introduced a smaller, cheaper option.

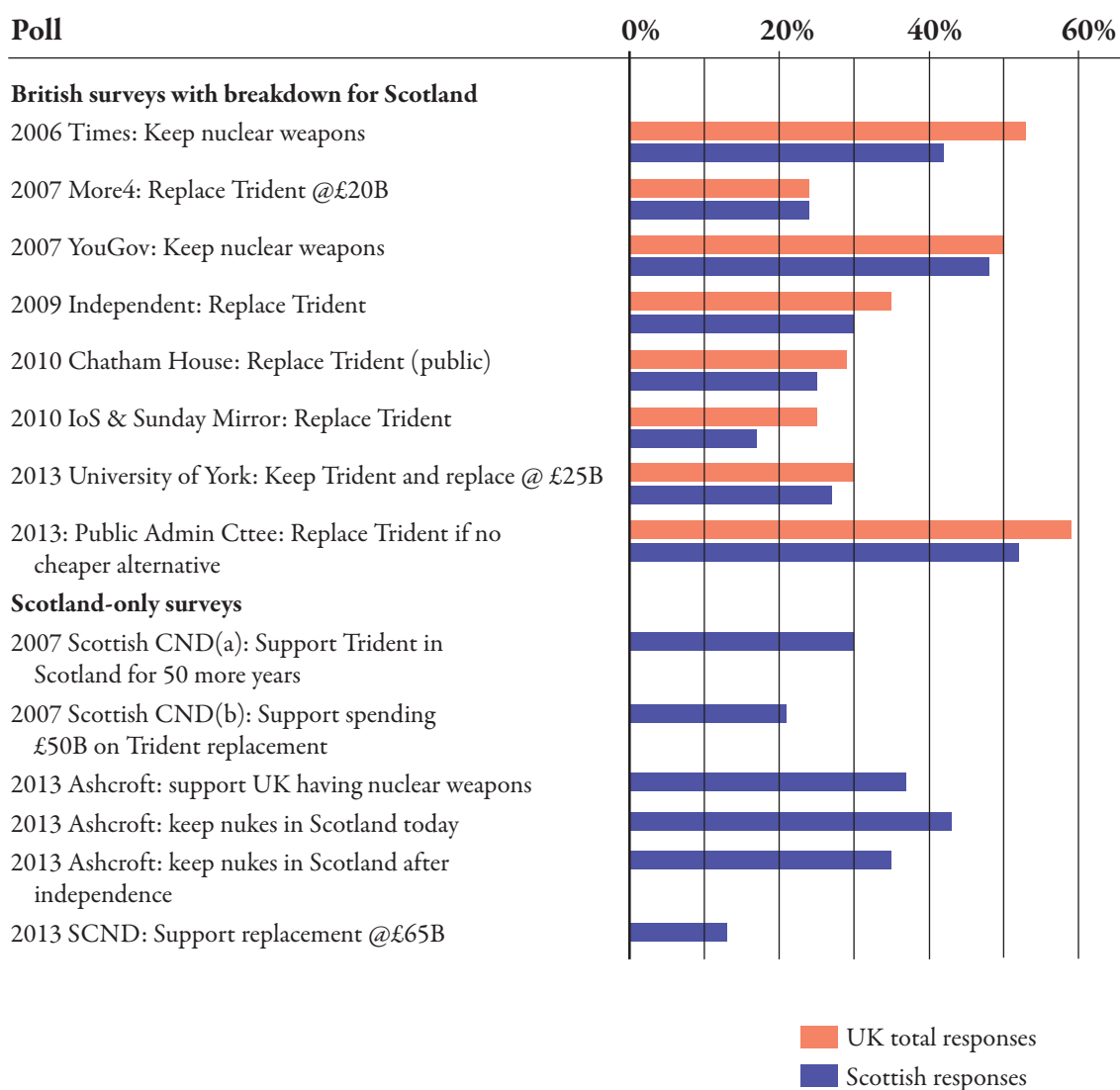


## 8. Scotland

A final word on Scotland. Scottish public opinion against the replacement of Trident runs higher than the UK average. Polls commissioned by Scottish CND in 2007 and 2013 show clear majorities against replacing Trident. A 2012 poll for the Scottish National Party also found 46% in favour of the Scottish parliament having the power to remove Trident from Scottish soil with 30% against. Trident has become a major, some would argue totemic, issue for the SNP in its campaign for a 'yes' vote in the September 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. The SNP has vowed to remove UK nuclear weapons from the Clyde Naval Base as safely and speedily as possible if it wins the referendum. Popular opinion against Trident and Trident replacement is not confined to those in favour of independence.

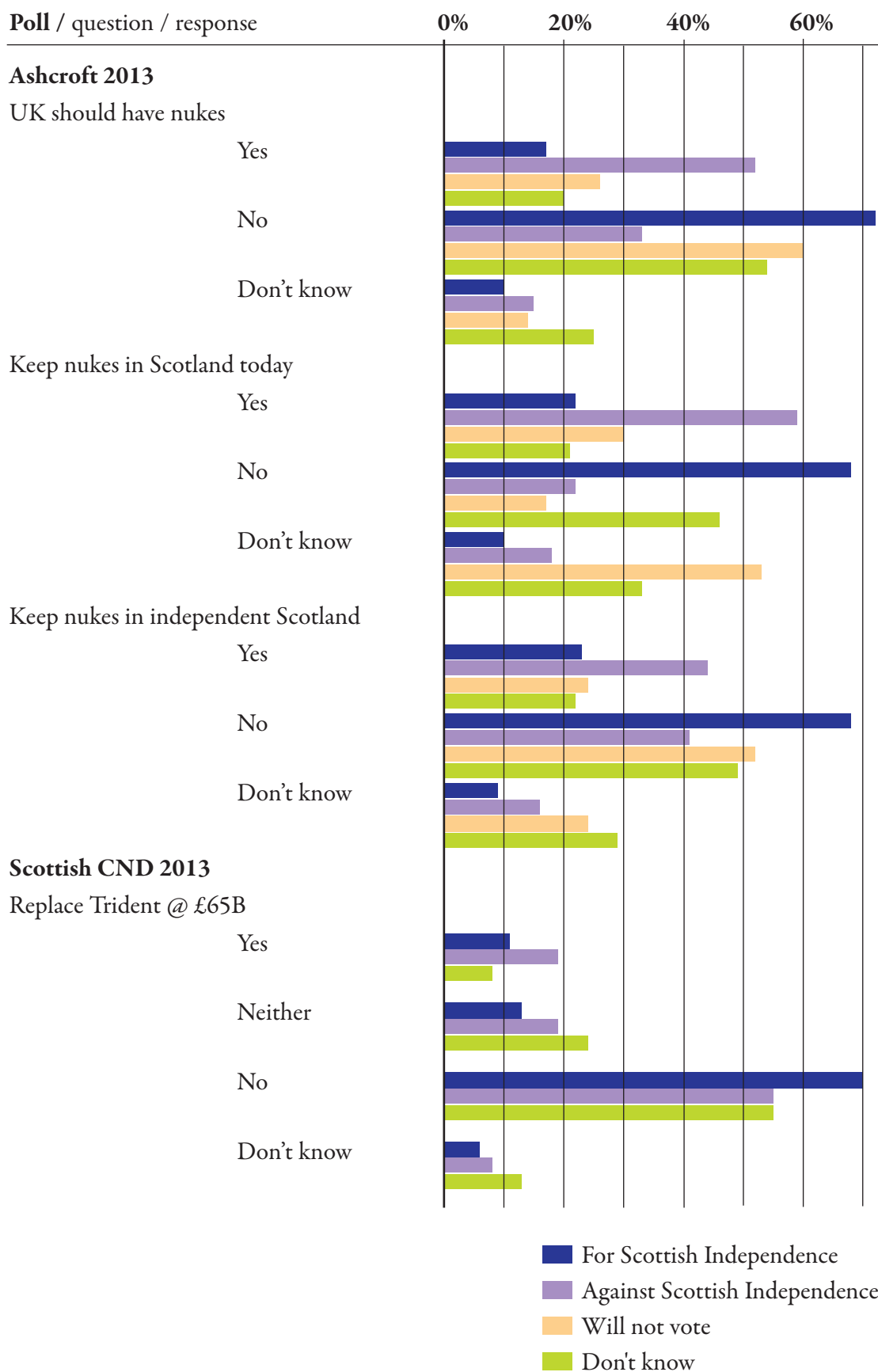
In a 2013 SCND poll 70% of those in favour of independence were also against Trident replacement, but 55% of those against independence or yet to make up their mind were also against Trident replacement. The Ashcroft (2013) poll and Public Administration Select Committee (2013) polls challenge this trend. When Scottish respondents were asked whether Trident should be based in Scotland the Ashcroft poll found 43% agreed, 39% said no, with 18% not sure. These figures were reversed when asked whether Trident should remain in Scotland in the event of independence: 35% were in favour, 50% against and 15% didn't know. The Public Administration Select Committee poll found 49% of Scots in favour of replacing Trident if no cheaper alternative were available, compared to 43% against with 8% not sure.

## UK and Scottish support for replacing Trident



Scottish independence would create real problems for the UK government in terms of Scottish public opinion and Trident. This is compounded by the challenges of relocating the Trident ballistic missile and warhead storage and processing facilities at the Clyde base to a new location in England or Wales. The 2013 poll for the University of York found only 17% of respondents supportive of the relocation of nuclear weapon facilities to a site near them. 43% were opposed with 30% neither supportive nor opposed.

## Scottish support for UK nuclear weapons and independence (Scottish adults)



# Conclusion

This collection of polls is indicative of trends in British and Scottish public opinion on nuclear weapons and the Trident replacement programme. Public opinion surveys and more deliberative public opinion research provide a representative view of the electorate’s interpretation of complex policy issues. The impact of public opinion is nonetheless subjective. It can be invoked to legitimise a range of policies as well as providing insight for policy-makers and a platform for innovation by policy entrepreneurs. It is worth recalling opinion polls in the early 1980s when the current Trident system was procured that generally found more support against Trident than in favour but the system was procured nonetheless without hesitation by the Thatcher government.<sup>54</sup> We should also heed the warning of the Public Administration Select Committee that “National opinion research tests have limitations, however, reflecting the impulsive reflexes of a cohort affected by contemporary media coverage”.<sup>55</sup>

Nevertheless, public opinion would appear to be gradually shifting away from a like-for-like replacement of the current Trident system, especially when the cost of building a new fleet of ballistic missile submarines is introduced. Opinion is more evenly split when a third option of a smaller, cheaper replacement is presented. There is also a plurality of views on whether UK nuclear weapons are necessary or important for UK security, and whether they make us safer, less safe or make no difference in terms of the security challenges we face and are likely to face over the coming decades. Perhaps the clearest conclusion, though, is that only a small section of the electorate are likely to allow the issue of nuclear weapons to influence their vote in a general election thereby creating political space for policy innovation.

54 Poll data from Lawrence Freedman, “Britain an Ex-Nuclear Power?”, *International Security*, 6: 2, 1981, p. 98:

	Sept. 1980*	Nov. 1980**	April 1981***
Oppose Trident	47%	53%	53%
Favour Trident	44%	37%	32%
Don't know	9%	10%	15%

\*Gallup poll of 1063 adults published in New Society 25 September 1980.  
\*\*Marplan poll of 1050 adults for Weekend World TV programme.  
\*\*\*Marplan poll of 733 adults for The Guardian 22 April 1981.  
55 House of Commons Public Administration Select Committee, Engaging the Public in National Strategy, HC 435 (London: HMSO, 2013), p. 28.

## About BASIC (British American Security Information Council)

BASIC is a small, transatlantic non-profit organization, working to build confidence in a shared, sustainable security agenda. We seek to test traditional concepts of nuclear deterrence as a security safeguard, and to bring policy-shapers together to focus on the collective security interests of non-proliferation and disarmament.

BASIC works in both nuclear weapon and non-nuclear weapon states, with a specific expert focus on the United Kingdom, United States, Europe and the Middle East. By bridging political and geographical divides, creating links between different perspectives in the nuclear weapons policy debate, and improving processes of negotiation and decision-making over nuclear weapons, we aim to address some of the strategic challenges posed by the changing global nuclear landscape.

BASIC is not a conventional advocacy organization. Nor is it a traditional think tank. What distinguishes BASIC from other organizations is our uniquely non-partisan, dialogue-based approach. We provide a discreet forum for constructive engagement between individuals from different geographical, political or cultural backgrounds on traditionally sensitive or complex issues.

Our aim is to break through existing barriers, rather than reinforce entrenched thinking; to build understanding of different perspectives and identify

commonalities; to use this to encourage fresh or alternative approaches; and to feed these findings back in to existing policy debate.

Our work aims to complement that of policy-makers, think-tanks, research organizations and advocacy groups.

For more information please visit our website: [www.basicint.org](http://www.basicint.org)



BASIC in London  
3 Whitehall Court  
London SW1A 2EL  
Tel: +44 (0) 207 766 3461 / 65

BASIC in Washington  
110 Maryland Ave., NE Suite 205  
Washington, DC 20002  
Tel: +1 (0) 202 546 8055



## Appendix I:

### Trident Alternatives Study: Terms of Reference

The study will take the form of an 18-month assessment led by the Cabinet Office. The Minister for the Armed Forces will be consulted on the work plan and will maintain close involvement as the project progresses.

The scope of the work will be limited to the following questions:

- (i) Are there credible alternatives to a submarine-based deterrent?
- (ii) Are there credible submarine-based alternatives to the current proposal, e.g. modified Astute using cruise missiles?
- (iii) Are there alternative nuclear postures, i.e. non-CASD, which could maintain credibility?

The analysis should make an assessment of how alternatives could be delivered, the feasibility, cost and industrial implications, level of risk and credibility.

The study will report jointly to the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister.

## Appendix 2:

### List of surveys

Dates	Pollster	Client	Sample
9-13 Sept 2005 <a href="http://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Archive/Polls/greenpeace.pdf">http://www.ipsos-mori.com/Assets/Docs/Archive/Polls/greenpeace.pdf</a>	MORI	Greenpeace	1973 British adults
28-29 June 2006 <a href="http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/23_06_06dpolitics_nuclear.pdf">http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/23_06_06dpolitics_nuclear.pdf</a>	Populus	Daily Politics	1003 British adults
21-23 June 2006 <a href="http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2006_july_guardian_july_poll.pdf">http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2006_july_guardian_july_poll.pdf</a>	ICM	Guardian	1001 British adults
8-10 Dec 2006 <a href="http://www.populus.co.uk/uploads/download_pdf-101206-The-Times-Political-Attitudes.pdf">http://www.populus.co.uk/uploads/download_pdf-101206-The-Times-Political-Attitudes.pdf</a>	Populus	Times	1513 British adults
8-10 Jan 2007 <a href="http://www.cnduk.org/images/stories/resources/globalabolition/nuclear_weapon_convention_yougov_poll_jan07.pdf">http://www.cnduk.org/images/stories/resources/globalabolition/nuclear_weapon_convention_yougov_poll_jan07.pdf</a>	YouGov	CND	2253 British adults
26-29 Jan 2007 <a href="http://www.banthebomb.org/newbombs/poll.htm">http://www.banthebomb.org/newbombs/poll.htm</a>	ICM	Scottish CND	n/a
21-22 Feb 2007 <a href="http://www.populus.co.uk/uploads/download_pdf-220207-More-4-News-Nuclear-Deterrent.pdf">http://www.populus.co.uk/uploads/download_pdf-220207-More-4-News-Nuclear-Deterrent.pdf</a>	Populus	More4News	1006 British adults

Dates	Pollster	Client	Sample
26-28 March 2007 <a href="http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/today_uk_import/YG-Archives-pol-dTel-DefenceBritainRole-070404.pdf">http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/today_uk_import/YG-Archives-pol-dTel-DefenceBritainRole-070404.pdf</a>	YouGov	n/a	2042 British adults
26-29 July 2007 <a href="http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/projects/2007-global-public-opinion-poll-attitudes-towards-nuclear-weapons">http://www.thesimonsfoundation.ca/projects/2007-global-public-opinion-poll-attitudes-towards-nuclear-weapons</a>	Angus Reid	Simons Foundation	1000 British adults
29 Jan-19 Feb 2008 <a href="http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/dec08/WSI_NucElim_Dec08_quaire.pdf">http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/dec08/WSI_NucElim_Dec08_quaire.pdf</a>	WordPublicOpinion.org	n/a	800 British adults
9-10 June 2009 <a href="http://www.populus.co.uk/uploads/download_pdf-100609-The-Times-2005-Labour-Voters-Poll.pdf">http://www.populus.co.uk/uploads/download_pdf-100609-The-Times-2005-Labour-Voters-Poll.pdf</a>	Populus	Times	
10-11 July 2009 <a href="http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2009_july_guardian_poll.pdf">http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2009_july_guardian_poll.pdf</a>	ICM	Guardian	1000 British adults
21-23 July 2009 <a href="http://iis.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/people%20magazine.pdf">http://iis.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/people%20magazine.pdf</a>	YouGov	People Magazine	2218 British adults
4-6 Sept 2009 <a href="http://www.comres.co.uk/polls/Political_Poll_7_Sept_2009.pdf">http://www.comres.co.uk/polls/Political_Poll_7_Sept_2009.pdf</a>	ComRes	Independent	1001 British adults
24 June-2 July 2010 <a href="http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Europe/0710ch_yougov_survey.pdf">http://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/public/Research/Europe/0710ch_yougov_survey.pdf</a>	YouGov	Chatham House	2481 British adults + 877 British 'opinion formers'
23-24 April 2010 <a href="http://iis.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/YG-Archives-ST-trackers-24.04.pdf">http://iis.yougov.co.uk/extranets/ygarchives/content/pdf/YG-Archives-ST-trackers-24.04.pdf</a>	YouGov	Sunday Times	1412 British adults
23 April 2010 <a href="http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2010_april_st_camp_poll3.pdf">http://www.icmresearch.com/pdfs/2010_april_st_camp_poll3.pdf</a>	ICM	Sunday Telegraph	1080 British adults
14-16 Sept 2010 n/a	ComRes	Independent on Sunday and Sunday Mirror	2028 British adults
10-12 Oct 2012 <a href="http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/8nauq46tm7/SNP%20Scottish%20Independence%20Results%20121015.pdf">http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/8nauq46tm7/SNP%20Scottish%20Independence%20Results%20121015.pdf</a>	YouGov	Scottish National Party	1002 Scottish adults
16-28 Nov 2012 n/a	MORI	UNA-UK	1,053 British adults
20-28 Feb 2013 <a href="http://www.tns-bmrb.co.uk/assets-uploaded/documents/nuclear-weapons-scot-independence-poll-13-mar-2013_1363172540.pdf">http://www.tns-bmrb.co.uk/assets-uploaded/documents/nuclear-weapons-scot-independence-poll-13-mar-2013_1363172540.pdf</a>	TNS BRBM	Scottish CND	1001 Scottish adults
6-8 March 2013 <a href="http://www.york.ac.uk/media/politics/documents/research/YouGov%20-%20University%20of%20York%20-%20nuclear%20weapons%20results%20130311%20RESULTS.pdf">http://www.york.ac.uk/media/politics/documents/research/YouGov%20-%20University%20of%20York%20-%20nuclear%20weapons%20results%20130311%20RESULTS.pdf</a>	YouGov	University of York	3390 British adults
29 April-2 May 2013 <a href="http://lordashcroftpolls.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Trident-poll-data-tables.xls">http://lordashcroftpolls.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Trident-poll-data-tables.xls</a>	YouGov	Lord Ashcroft	1236 Scottish adults
10-24 April 2013 3 surveys on 'The Nuclear Deterrent' of 1997, 1903 and 1722 British adults <a href="http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubadm/435/435.pdf">http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmpubadm/435/435.pdf</a>	YouGov	Public Administration Select Committee	

